UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/440
28 September 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 77

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Palestine refugees in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in pursuance of its resolution 48/40 E of 10 December 1993, the operative paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"1. Demands once again that Israel desist from the removal and resettlement of Palestine refugees in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 and from the destruction of their shelters;

"2. Requests the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to address the acute situation of the Palestine refugees in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 and accordingly to extend all the services of the Agency to those refugees;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Commissioner-General, to resume issuing identification cards to all Palestine refugees and their descendants in the occupied Palestinian territory, irrespective of whether or not they are recipients of rations and services of the Agency;

"4. Also requests the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly, before the opening of its forty-ninth session, on the implementation of the present resolution and, in particular, on the compliance of Israel with paragraph 1 above."

2. On 27 July 1994, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any steps his Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 27 July 1994, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

"Israel's position on these resolutions has been set forth in successive annual replies submitted to the Secretary-General in recent years, the latest of which being Israel's note verbale dated 15 June 1993. In addition, Israel's representative to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee reiterated Israel's position in his statement dated 8 December 1993 in which he said, inter alia, 'The series of resolutions on UNRWA ignores the new political reality following the agreement between Israel and the PLO, as well as the bilateral and multilateral negotiations.' Accordingly, Israel abstained on resolutions 48/40 A and D, and voted against resolutions 48/40 E to J.

"It should be noted that, in the past year, major progress has been achieved in the framework of the peace process, including the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington, D.C. on 13 September 1993 by Israel and the PLO, and the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994. Israel believes that UNRWA can play an important role in promoting the social and economic advancement foreseen in the agreements between Israel and the PLO, and accordingly looks forward to continuing the cooperation and good working relationship with UNRWA.

"In the light of the above, Israel considers it essential, now more than ever, that the General Assembly focus its resolutions regarding UNRWA on the issues directly related to the Agency's humanitarian tasks and that it refrain from adopting resolutions related to political issues irrelevant to the work for which UNRWA is responsible, and detached from the new reality.

"To this end, it would be advisable to consolidate the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly regarding UNRWA into one resolution. This would also be compatible with the necessity to rationalize the work of the General Assembly."

4. The following information concerning Israel's compliance with General Assembly resolution 48/40 E is based on reports from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

5. During the period under review, the Israeli authorities continued to demolish and seal refugee shelters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on punitive grounds. The matter is dealt with in detail in the Commissioner-General's annual report to the General Assembly. 1/

6. The Agency followed up with the Israeli authorities the rehousing of refugees who remain affected by the demolitions in 1971 in the Gaza Strip. Paragraph 6 of last year's report (A/48/373) referred to the status of 87 families categorized as living in hardship conditions. The situation on 30 June 1994 remains the same: of these 87 families, 12 continue to live in conditions of hardship, 19 remain unsatisfactorily housed, 38 are satisfactorily housed and 18 had previously purchased houses in projects sponsored by the Israeli authorities. The situation of the 12 families living in conditions of hardship has been checked several times during the reporting period. Despite earlier assurances by the Israeli authorities that they would be rehoused, that a solution had been developed and would be implemented as soon as possible, no progress was made.

7. During the reporting period, the Commissioner-General obtained the following information relating to refugee shelters demolished by the Israeli authorities in the Gaza Strip on the grounds that they had been built without proper authority on State land outside camp boundaries:

(a) There has been no change in the situation of the families living on the northern perimeter of Jabalia Camp who, as described in paragraph 7 (a) of last year's report, had been told by the Israeli authorities in 1989 to remove some of their shelter extensions. No demolitions took place during the reporting period, but the shelters remain isolated by the bulldozing of sand around them.

(b) Of the 35 families whose shelters on the perimeter of Beach Camp were demolished in 1983, 18 families now have plots of land at Sheikh Radwan and Beit Lahiya Housing Projects; one family is occupying a vacant shelter in Beach Camp and the situation of the remaining 16 families remains the same as was described in paragraph 7 (b) of last year's report.

8. Regarding the situation of the families who, at the instance of the Israeli authorities, had agreed to relocate from Block Q of Rafah Camp to the Tel-es-Sultan housing project, 10 families remain living in 10 shelters isolated by sand ramparts.

9. During the reporting period, no new plots of land in housing projects in the Gaza Strip were allocated by the Israeli authorities for refugees living in camps. No new movements took place from camps to housing projects and no new plots were allocated. During the reporting period no additional families from Canada camp in Egypt have returned to the Gaza Strip to accommodation provided by the Israeli authorities in Tel-es-Sultan. Developments are under way for the movement of approximately 70 additional families to Tel-es-Sultan in the near future.

10. The Israeli authorities, according to information available to the Commissioner-General, have up to the present time allocated approximately 3,914

plots of land in the Gaza Strip for housing projects. A total of 2,605 plots have been built on by 3,714 refugee families comprising 22,946 persons, buildings on 236 plots are under construction, 936 plots are still vacant and 137 have been built on by non-refugee families. In addition, 3,034 refugee families, consisting of 18,823 persons, have moved into 2,666 completed housing units consisting of 5,893 rooms.

11. With regard to the request addressed to the Commissioner-General in paragraph 2 of resolution 48/40 E, the Commissioner-General advises that since 1988, in addition to providing all its regular services, the Agency has been providing emergency food, medical and other assistance to those in need in the occupied territory. The Agency has also continued with its longer-term programmes to upgrade infrastructure, especially in the camps, and to improve economic and social conditions. These programmes, including in particular the Peace Implementation Programme initiated by the Agency after the signing of the Declaration of Principles on the Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993, are discussed in detail in the recent reports of the Commissioner-General. 2/

12. The Secretary-General regrets that he is unable at present to comply with the request addressed to him in paragraph 3 of the resolution. Under an arrangement that has been followed for 40 years, all refugee families registered with UNRWA are in possession of registration cards issued by the Agency. While these cards indicate the number of family members and whether they are eligible for services, they are not identification cards and have a much more limited purpose. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA has pointed out that the Agency issues a registration card reflecting data about the refugee family concerned, which is entered on the registration roll at the time of registration. While the need for documentation, such as is required in the resolution, is appreciated, the Commissioner-General does not have the means to issue identity cards as such. He will, however, keep the situation under review to see whether appropriate documentation regarding the registration status of individual members of refugee families could be issued.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/49/13), chap. IV, sect. B.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/49/13), chap. II, sect. B; ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/44/13), chap. VI, sects. C and D; ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/45/13), chap. VI, sects. C and D; ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/46/13), chap. VI, sects. C and D; ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/47/13), chap. VI, sects. C and D; ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/48/13), chap. II, sects. D and E; ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/49/13), chap. II, sects. D and E.